

# INTERPRETATION ON TELEVISION

Interpreting on TV requires meticulous forward planning. Once the main features of the programme are known – duration, languages spoken by participants, etc. – the consultant interpreter can set up the most appropriate team.

## TYPES OF PROGRAMMES

Interpreters normally work on TV in two types of programme:

- Discussions or interviews produced in a studio, whether broadcast live or pre-recorded.
- Live broadcasts of remote events, for instance an award ceremony or a speech by a dignitary.

## PREPARATION

It is important for interpreters to have access to the background documents prepared by the programme researchers on guests, subjects to be discussed, or the event to be broadcast. If there is a programme script available with questions to be put to the guests, it is essential that interpreters have a copy.

When a programme is produced in a studio, irrespective of its being pre-recorded or broadcast live, there is a full rehearsal which interpreters should attend so as to become familiar with the programme format and the content of the audiovisual material.

Before a studio-produced programme goes on the air, the presenter frequently has a brief chat with the guests. Interpreters should be present, in order to familiarise themselves with the guests' accent and delivery.

Before the programme goes on the air, it is advisable to test the sound in "live" conditions, with the guests and audience present. If the audience is not there, sound levels may not correspond to real conditions. Experience has also shown that during the sound check, guests – who listen to interpretation through a small, concealed earpiece – often request that the volume be increased, and this cannot be done once the programme has started.

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## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Interpreters will need:

- One booth per language. Booths should be soundproofed and properly ventilated, with seating and a working surface. TV stations often have mini-studios which can be used as interpreting booths – as long as they are not also used for other purposes during the course of the broadcast.
- Microphones with “on-off” switches which can be operated by the interpreters themselves. A "cough" button should also be provided to switch off the microphone briefly without breaking off the signal.
- Headphones, which must be mono (not stereo), connected to an amplifier, with a volume control operated by the interpreter. Interpreters should never hear their own voice in the headphones; this is most disturbing and would complicate their task enormously.

There are two steps to achieving this:

- By feeding only post fader audio – never return audio – to the interpreter’s headphones.
- By adjusting the volume of the public address system which allows the audience to hear the live interpretation in such a way that it is audible, but also ensuring that the interpreter’s amplified voice is not fed back into the presenter’s or guests’ microphones.
- A TV monitor showing the programme as seen by viewers at home. A second monitor showing the guests is also desirable, so that interpreters can see their reactions when the producer cuts to other shots.
- Either a sound technician must be in attendance throughout the broadcast or else interpreters must have a direct link to the control room.
- When broadcasting a remote event, testing to obtain sound quality as close as possible to studio levels is of paramount importance. It is thus strongly advisable to establish the connection with the remote location in advance, so that sound checks can be carried out with the interpreters in attendance.

## CREDITS

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**Information provided by the interpreters of ESPaiic – Spanish Region of AIIC  
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